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LIFESTYLE COLUMNISTS

# Last chance camping for the summer



*By Dennis Miller*

***Yesterday 8:18 p.m.***

If you love being in the great outdoors, chances are you will also love camping. We here at the Abilene Public Library seem to have camping on the brain this summer! Such outings can be great fun, but to insure an enjoyable and safe experience, preplanning is important. We are a great place to start, with all kinds of books and online resources.

Two books I particularly like are "The Camper's Companion: the

Pack-Along Guide for Better Outdoor Trips" by Greenspan and Kahn and "The Happy Camper: An Essential Guide to Life Outdoors" by Keven Callan. The "Companion" explains how to pack the right gear, food and clothing and prepare a first-aid kit before you leave home. Among many other topics, it covers where and how to pitch a tent, how to weather a bad storm, fish for supper, cook a "four star meal," avoid getting lost in the woods and how to enjoy camping with youngsters and even with your dog. Among a myriad topics, Callan suggests what essentials to pack, how to select a campsite, read a map and compass, build a fire and ward off bugs and other unwanted wildlife. He also covers such diverse topics as how to paddle a canoe or kayak and photograph a landscape.

Much shorter, quicker reads would be "A Guide to Happy Family Camping" by Tammerie Spires and "Camping for Mere Mortals: It Ain't No Five Star Hotel" by Michael Hodgson. Spires offers 90 useful tips including suggestions for places to go and see as well as essentials when packing. She reminds us that "the more situations you are prepared for, the more you are prepared to enjoy." Hodgson takes a humorous approach while offering many good ideas. Among the chapters in his book: "Mosquitoes are an Emergency, a Broken Nail Ain't" and "Nature Study and Photography are Grounds for Divorce".

Fewer than 40 pages, "Essential Camping for Teens" by Kristine Hooks lacks detail but still covers the essentials of how to prepare and then enjoy a safe experience in the wilderness. It seemed to me appropriate for anyone, not just teens.

Before heading out on a camping trip in Texas I would want to consult the comprehensive directory "Texas Parks and Campgrounds" which covers in great detail over 400 public parks with campgrounds statewide. Included are all state and national parks, national forests and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers parks with public camping.

If heading to neighboring New Mexico consult "New Mexico Campgrounds: The Statewide Guide" and/or "Best Tent Camping New Mexico." Privately owned campgrounds and parks are detailed in "Woodall's North American Campground Directory," which lists nearly 13,000 parks and campgrounds. The "National Forest Campground & Recreation Directory" is a complete guide to some 4300 national forest campgrounds in America.

If you go to the library's website [www.abilenetx.com/apl](http://www.abilenetx.com/apl) and click on "E-Resources," "Web Guide," "Sports" and then "Outdoor and Recreation," you'll see some great Internet resources. We suggest [www.camping.com](http://www.camping.com) (anything & everything camping and RVing) which has extensive reviews of campgrounds and dozens of interesting and timely articles. "American Trails" lists the best trails to hike in the 50 states and Canada.

So, even if you feel the summer slipping away at a faster and faster pace, there's still time to get in a camping trip, with the help of your Abilene Public Library.

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